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- Rachel Hachlili,** *Ancient Synagogues - Archaeology and Art: New Discoveries and Current Research.* (Joan Taylor) 236

tradition (p. 129). In pursuance of this consciously medievalizing programme, a law was passed requiring all buildings to be at least faced with Jerusalem stone, a policy typical of Arts and Crafts infatuation with the use of traditional materials (though often erroneously credited to Israeli regulations). Secondly, Ashbee produced a plan for the Old City and its environs, with built-up areas surrounded by rural belts, which bear a striking resemblance to his town plan for Letchworth Garden City (the two plans are illustrated) – clearly an importation of Arts and Crafts aesthetics to the Judean landscape. Thirdly, Ashbee established guilds of workers in ‘traditional’ crafts like weaving, pottery and cabinet making – another desideratum of the Arts and Crafts movement – with the purpose of ‘re-educating the natives into their own traditions, now socially restructured with an admixture of the medieval guild’ (p. 138). For Goldhill, these policies are subsumed under the need for imperial control as imposed by British officialdom, so that ‘in Jerusalem we have an extraordinary case of the principles of Morris and Ruskin, as taken up and developed by Ashbee, affecting the policies of preservation and planning... The aesthetics of the Arts and Crafts movement here becomes fully implicated and intertwined with the structures of imperial authority and power’ (p. 143).

There are several other thoughtful contributions to this volume which will interest scholars and students in various disciplines as well as general readers. Its usefulness is however undermined by some all-too-common failings. Many citations are unaccompanied by referenced footnotes, there is no bibliography or author index, and the illustrations are of poor quality. Above all, Oxford University Press, as so often, has ensured minimal access to the work by those who would most benefit from it by its exorbitant price.

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Rachel Hachlili, *Ancient Synagogues - Archaeology and Art: New Discoveries and Current Research*. Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 1 The Near and Middle East, 105. Leiden: Brill, 2013, xxxiv + 738 pp. €218.00. ISBN: 978–9–00425–773–3.

Rachel Hachlili (Professor of Archaeology, University of Haifa, Israel) is a renowned expert on ancient Jewish art, and therefore it is not surprising that a key focus of this monumental volume concerns the artistic repertoire of the synagogues found in the area of Israel-Palestine. Her work in this volume is prompted by the fact that there have been numerous new excavations over the past decades that have greatly illuminated synagogue architecture and art. Debates have been raging about dating, typologies and origins. Hachlili enters this contentious world by

presenting the evidence judiciously, site by site, topic by topic, allowing researchers to use this volume as a compendium. However, she also presents her own analyses of key questions. While her main interest is in art and mosaics, she includes also significant data and interpretations on architectural forms and epigraphy.

The book has a good initial chapter (I) about the synagogue as an institution, which summarises also current debates about synagogue origins, arguing ultimately for a complex approach: the 'synagogue did not develop from one origin; rather, it evolved and progressed in time and place according to the needs of particular congregations' (p. 21). However, Hachlili curiously does not refer to the work of Anders Runesson, Donald Binder and Birger Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue from its Origins to 200 C.E.: A Source Book* (2008), which is a shame as it also outlines the current state of research on origins and lists the synagogues of Israel-Palestine, though it includes also the Diaspora.

Chapter II focuses on Second Temple Period synagogues, which Hachlili defines as inherently problematic in terms of identification, since 'they lacked distinctive architectural features and symbols, making classification difficult' (p. 23). Nevertheless, the evidence as presented from Jericho, Masada, Herodium, Qiryat Sefer, Gamla and Modi'in does seem to show a kind of standard model of a rectangular space with columns in the central area, and stone benches around the walls, even without a Torah shrine. In fact, Hachlili notes, that the 'most important and distinctive element of these Second Temple period communal synagogue structures are the benches lining the walls, which must have been specifically added for the congregants to sit upon when congregating and worshiping, the focus being the center of the hall' (p. 46).

Perhaps what complicates the picture most during the Second Temple period (through to 135 CE) is that synagogues at this time could be private. Indeed, Hachlili presents the evidence that they have been found within or adjacent to private palatial complexes at Jericho (pp. 28–30), in the First Revolt occupation of Masada (pp. 30–33) and in the Bar Kokhba period occupation of the palace-fortress of Herodion (pp. 28–29). Critics of the identification of the Jericho structure as a synagogue can assume it had to have a public use to be so designated, and, as Hachlili (p. 30) states: the Jericho synagogue 'is more reminiscent of Hellenistic-Roman villas and may have been part of one'. From the evidence as shown, though Hachlili does not state this definitively, it is obvious that people with sufficient resources could construct an enclosure they utilised for Sabbath assemblies within their personal precincts. However, Hachlili shies away from a sure identification of some private structures as synagogues. The 1st-century BCE benched structure adjacent to *miqva'ot*, identified in Shuaifat (Khirbet a-Ras) within an agricultural complex, may then also be a synagogue, but here she is sceptical: 'the building complex is no longer identified as a synagogue' (p.39). One wonders why not,

given it has the remains of *miqva`ot*, and there was a room with benches around the walls. There was even a niche in the wall oriented towards Jerusalem.

Further chapters in the volume are rich and comprehensive. Chapter III covers ‘Recently Excavated and Newly Published Synagogues’, meaning post-Second Temple structures found in the last 30 or so years, and Hachlili provides an excellent review. Hachlili then goes on to provide insightful discussions in: IV, ‘Synagogue Architecture and Ornamentation’; V, ‘Synagogue Art, Significance and Impact’; VI, ‘Jewish Symbols’; VII, ‘The Jewish Calendar Represented by the Zodiac Cycle’; VIII, ‘Illustrated Biblical Tales’; IX, ‘Motifs in Jewish Synagogue Art’; X, ‘Artists, Workshops and Repertoire’; XI, ‘Inscriptions’; XII, ‘Coins and the Synagogue’; XIII, ‘Women’; XIV, ‘Dating’; XV, ‘Conclusions’, with a supplement on the late 2nd century CE structure at Qazion, re-excavated by Hachlili herself with Ann Killebrew in 1993–97. In regard to the latter case, the question is whether Qazion can be considered a synagogue or else a temple-like ‘monumental complex’. Radically, for Hachlili this is ‘a Jewish cultic space that preserved the importance of the Jerusalem priesthood in the centuries after the destruction of the Second Temple and the Jewish and Bar Kokhba revolts’ (p. 669). It provided ‘an ambiance for the performance and preservation of some of the temple rituals and ceremonies originally carried out by the priests’ (p. 672), with some connection to honouring the emperor, given that Septimius Severus and his family are specifically mentioned in the lintel inscription.

The chapter on women is particularly interesting to this reviewer. Hachlili discusses the representation of women in Byzantine synagogue art, largely as ‘Virgo’ (Betulah) and as The Seasons (focusing on hair, head coverings/ornaments, jewellery, dress and shoes), but also as real women (donors?) in the recently-found in the 5th century synagogue mosaic of Huqoq. She asks whether women were seated separately from men (p. 579), but concludes after a too-brief summary of views that ‘women worshipped together with the men’ without separation, and that ‘the contrary opinion, that women worshipped in a gallery or in a separate section of the hall, has not been proven’ (p. 580). Here Hachlili’s date of publication means she just missed an important article by Chad Spigel (2012), who explored the question of separate seating in ancient synagogues. A key question is whether there was an upper women’s gallery. In the Palestinian Talmud there is a reference to the slaughter of Jews in the Alexandrian synagogue, described as a דיפליסטון, *diplistoon*, a term similar to that found regarding secular basilicas (Vitruvius, *De architectura*, 5: 1: 6), implying a higher and lower level, which is borne out in the words of the women who say, after the men have been killed, ‘Do to those above as you have done to those below’ (j. *Sukkot*, 5: 1 [55b], but see Spigel 2012, 71 n.40 on the textual and translation problems). According to Spigel this type of

synagogue construction seems to be evidenced in Khirbet Susiya (4th–8th centuries; see Hachlili, 118), or Khirbet Shema' (Spigel 2012:75; Hachlili, p. 73) dating from the 3rd century. In Gush Halav (Hachlili, pp. 63–4), a simple single-storey synagogue structure dating to the mid–3rd century was modified in the 4th century to have a mezzanine level, which Spigel (2012: 76–8) suggests would be a women's gallery. Spigel (2012: 69–71) notes that the separation of men and women – with women above on a balcony and men below – is indicated in m. *Middot* 2: 5 (cf. m. *Sukkot* 5: 1–4) and in t. *Sukkot* 4: 1 this is defined in terms of when there was festive dancing in the water drawing ceremony of Sukkoth. On the basis of this the Babylonian Talmud (b. *Sukkot* 51b–52a) defines the *mechitza* as a dividing wall between men and women. In fact, one-level gendered divisions of space are also evidenced: a partition of canes is mentioned by Rabbi Raba and one of rugs by Rabbi Abaye is noted in b. *Kidd.* 81a (Spigel 2012: 72). Thus Spigel (2012: 78) suggests that in Gush Halav the Jewish 'community may have made a move from separate seating using a non-permanent room divider in the main hall to separate seating using a mezzanine'.

Also of interest is the question of dating of synagogues, in chapter XIV. While Hachlili notes my dating of the synagogue of Capernaum to the 5th century, she still sides with the excavators, who date it slightly earlier, to the 4th–5th century CE, despite the presence of coins sealed beneath its floors that would suggest the later dating (pp. 590–3). She appears quite clearly opposed to Magness's re-dating to the 6th century, suggesting that the evidence for 4th–5th century coins and pottery underneath the white synagogue (and occasional possible 6th century material, according to Magness) is the result of later renovations. Perhaps only new excavations at the site will settle these questions. Overall, Hachlili is quite conventional in her dating of the building of synagogues, noting that there were two key boom times: the first one in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries, and the second in the 6th century. She does not draw out these conclusions by looking to the wider historical context in any detail.

This volume deals with a field of research still being illuminated by new discoveries. Such is the energy of current excavations of synagogues that already there are sections of the volume that are out of date. On the section covering the 5th–century synagogue of Huqoq (pp. 66–67) continuing excavations (directed by Jodi Magness) have since brought to light further mosaics. In 2013 a new mosaic was discovered which shows a meeting between a Jewish High Priest and the Hellenistic ruler, accompanied by battle elephants, possibly referencing the Books of Maccabees (Magness 2013). In 2015 a mosaic inscription was found at the centre of a panel surrounded by humans, animals and mythological creatures associated with Dionysus, and there was also painted ivy on the plaster around the pillars. In

2016 another mosaic was found showing Samson carrying the gate of Gaza on his shoulders, suggesting to the excavators that the synagogue had a Samson cycle. as well as depictions of pairs of animals going into Noah's ark.

The publication of this volume also just missed out on including the synagogue at Horvat Kur, excavated as part of the Kinneret Regional Project led by Jurgen Zangenberg (Zangenberg et. al. 2013), in which a stone table was found, in secondary use, with significant similarities to the table found in Magdala (illustrated in Hachlili's volume on Fig. II: 13). There was also a stone seat, and a mosaic with an inscription and also a tabernacle menorah, dating from the first phase of synagogue construction at the site in the 4th century.

In the summer of 2016 at Tel Reches, near Mount Tabor in Galilee, excavations led by Motti Aviam of the Kinneret Institute for Galilean Archaeology (Kinneret College) discovered a 1st century BCE/CE synagogue. It measured 7.90 × 9 m, and there were the remains of limestone benches around the walls, and one square pillar base. This adds to the repertoire of Second Temple synagogues and falls squarely within the common type. At the same time Zeev Weiss found the remains of a possible 1st century CE synagogue (destroyed 3rd century CE) in Sepphoris (Zippori). However, this large public building included colourful frescoes including paintings of a lion, a bull (?), a bird and a leopard (?).

Notwithstanding the need for some updates as a result of these discoveries, this is a very impressive volume. It is a magnificent, expertly-researched book and one that is richly illustrated, including a large section of coloured plates at the back. Hachlili's study is wide-ranging and thorough in presenting the material and highlighting key questions about synagogue use. This is a work that is essential to have in any library that deals with ancient Judaism and its archaeology.

Magness, J., (2013) 'Scholar's Update: New Mosaics from the Huqoq Synagogue', *BAR* 39:05, <http://members.bibarch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=39&Issue=5&ArticleID=9>

Runesson, A., D. Binder and B. Olsson eds., (2008) *The Ancient Synagogue from its Origins to 200 C.E.: A Source Book* (Leiden).

Spigel, C.S., (2012) 'Reconsidering the Question of Separate Seating in Ancient Synagogues', *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 63, 62–83.

Zangenberg, J., S. Münger, R. Hakola and B.R. McCane., (2013) 'The Kinneret Regional Project Excavations of a Byzantine Synagogue at Horvat Kur, Galilee, 2010–2013: A Preliminary Report', *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 2 (4): 557–76.

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